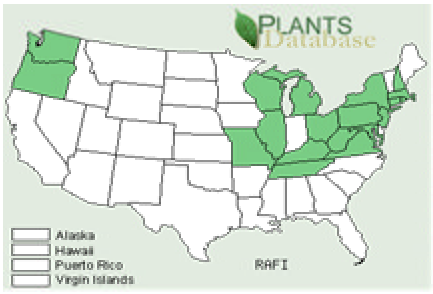
Lesser Celandine

Ranunculus ficaria L.

DESCRIPTION: Lesser celandine, also known as fig buttercup, is an herbaceous, perennial plant in the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae). Plants have a basal rosette of dark green, shiny, stalked leaves that are kidney- to heart-shaped. The flowers open in March and April, have eight glossy, butter-yellow petals, and are borne singly on delicate stalks that rise above the leaves. Pale-colored bulblets are produced along the stems of the above-ground portions of the plant, but are not apparent until late in the flowering period. When in bloom, large infestations of lesser celandine appear as a green carpet with yellow dots, spreading across the forest floor. There are many varieties of lesser celandine including a double-flowered form with many crowded petals and dark green leaves mottled with silvery markings.

ECOLOGICAL THREAT: Lesser celandine is an exotic spring ephemeral and a vigorous growing groundcover that forms large, dense patches on the forest floor, displacing and preventing native plants from co-occurring. The ecological impact of lesser celandine is primarily on the native spring-flowering plant community and the various wildlife species associated with them.

DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES: Lesser celandine is currently found in nineteen states in the Northeast and Pacific Northwest. It is reported to be invasive in nine states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin, West Virginia), and the District of Columbia.



HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES: Lesser celandine occurs in moist forested floodplains and in some drier upland areas, and seems to prefer sandy soils.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES: Lesser celandine is very difficult to control but it can be managed with persistence over time using methods that are site appropriate. While manual methods are possible for some (small) infestations, the use of systemic herbicide kills the entire plant tip to root and minimizes soil disturbance. **Biological.** No biological control agents are currently available for lesser celandine. **Chemical.** Apply herbicide in late winter-early spring (March through May). **Manual.** For small infestations, lesser celandine may be pulled up by hand or dug up using a hand trowel or shovel. It is very important to remove all bulblets and tubers. **Mechanical.** If mechanical removal is to continue after dieback of the plants, individual plants or clumps will need to be marked with some sort of stakes or flagging because it will be impossible to relocate the plants otherwise. When conducting mechanical removal, care should be taken to minimize soil disturbance as much as possible. For this reason, mechanical control may be inappropriate for large infestations in high quality natural areas.

References: www.nps.gov/plants/alien, http://plants.usda.gov